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BEAVER IN RIGHT PLACE
IS A CONSERVATIONIST

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In many farming communities beavers are not wanted because their dams sometimes flood crops, and in some sections their burrowing in ditch banks interferes with irrigation. Rather than kill these "master engineers" for their pelts when they become a farm problem, the U. S. Department of Agriculture suggests their transfer to suitable mountain streams. In such places their dams help control floods and conserve water.

Methods of trapping beavers alive, transporting and transplanting them, and selecting proper planting sites are explained by the Department in a recently issued Farmers' Bulletin 1768, "Trapping and Transplanting Live Beavers." The bulletin was prepared by Leo K. Couch, of the Bureau of Biological Survey, who has had wide experience in assisting farmers, stockmen, and foresters, as well as officials of Federal and State agencies in charge of public lands, in transplanting these animals. Mr. Couch is now directing the cooperative wildlife research and management projects, under supervision of the Survey, at 9 land-grant colleges.

The bulletin points out that beavers for stocking purposes must be taken uninjured in traps from July to October. During this period the water is low and the young have been weaned and are old enough to shift for themselves. The trapping should, however, be in accordance with State laws. Two efficient traps for taking beavers alive, one developed by Vernon Bailey, retired naturalist of the Survey,

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and the other by Mr. Couch and Theo. H. Scheffer, another retired naturalist of the Survey, are described in the bulletin. Patents for these traps have been dedicated to the public and they may be made in any machine shop. Plans and materials required also are described in the bulletin. Special traps can be bought or built in machine shops, but padded steel traps are not recommended as they are likely to cripple the animals.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Further Information on Beavers Follows:

Intensive trapping of beavers for their pelts during the early development of the nation threatened their extinction, but under rigid protective laws the drain on their numbers has been halted. They are well established in more than half the States, and in some localities they become so abundant as to cause wholesale migration to less desirable places. In such instances the Department also recommends the transfer of surplus animals to suitable mountain streams. Large areas now in national forests, national parks, State forests, soil-conservation projects, reclamation projects, game refuges, city water sheds, and suitable sub-marginal farm lands can be stocked with beavers.

Observations over many years show that beavers are responsible for building up valuable bottom lands by checking--through pond construction--rapidly flowing waters filled with soil.

In States where conservation commissions are managing beaver production and regulating trapping, farmers and landowners benefit from the sale of pelts. Pennsylvania, for example, has had no beavers for approximately 70 years prior to 1917, and in that year the State liberated a pair imported from Wisconsin. From 1917 to 1924, 94 beavers were imported and set free in suitable waters of the State. The animals increased so rapidly that it became necessary to transfer

them to other sections.

A survey by the State Board of Game Commissioners of the streams in Pennsylvania in 1931 revealed 899 beaver dams with an estimated beaver population of 4,377, which by 1934 had increased to 15,000. During the 1934 trapping season 6,455 beavers were taken legally, which at the average price of \$15 a pelt brought the trappers \$96,825. In 1935, under increased trapping restrictions, 2,261 pelts were taken, which brought the trappers \$22,610, an average price of \$10 each.

Copies of Farmers' Bulletin 1768, "Trapping and Transplanting Live Beavers", may be obtained at 5 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

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